# Comparison capability a real plus

**BUSINESS TOOLS**



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Most business documents these days are written and edited electronically.

But electronic drafts only reflect the current version without any trace of what was added or deleted. If tracking changes from version to version is important to you, there are two programs that will help.

CompareRite bills itself as "the instant red liner." It quickly compares two versions of a document and creates a third draft, either on screen or on disk, summarizing the differences between them. This program works with documents of any size, even manuscripts hundreds of pages long. And it has several features that will appeal to professional editors, lawyers and secretaries.

The other "program" is actually a feature that is part of some high-end word processors. An example is the latest version of WordPerfect, 5.1. Buried in WordPerfect's "Mark Text" menu is the option Generate, which leads you to another option for comparing documents. After typing in the name of the second document, the screen shows a draft with the changes between the two v e r s i o n s merged together.

Both programs are easy to run and fast. With CompareRite, you must exit your word processing program, load CompareRite, and then work with your documents within that application.

With WordPerfect you just run the comparison feature while you're in one of the documents to be compared. With either program a comparison draft will then pop up on screen. The programs have slightly different approaches, with advantages to each.

Here are some of the unique features of CompareRite:

■ You can switch between documents using a built-in "viewer." By specifying the screen as output you can page through your text and then toggle among the old, the new and the combined versions. As you cycle through the various drafts, changes leap out in color in a readable format.

■ You can specify the comparison style. To maintain readability, CompareRite groups changes into sections of text. You can modify the scale of indicated changes from pinpoint to normal to broad. Pinpoint compares changes character-by-character and is harder to read; normal tends to highlight entire words and phrases that contain changes; and broad shows larger groups of text that contain differences.

The WordPerfect document comparison feature has a feature missing from CompareRite:

■ You can edit while viewing the comparison drafts. WordPerfect also creates a document with the red linings and strike outs merged together on screen. If you want to keep the new version with your edits, there is an option that will strip out all of the red linings and strike outs.

The WordPerfect approach has the advantages of keeping you in one program for both viewing and editing.

I found its display of changes between versions, however, crude and confusing compared with CompareRite.

■ The Bottom Line: The ability to make electronic document comparisons is essential for many professionals. Lawyers can easily detect any changes in contracts, wills or briefs. Editors can check between various versions of a story. And secretaries can save proofreading time.

CompareRite is published by Jurisoft, Inc., 763 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02139, (800) 262-5656. It costs $129.95. WordPerfect is published by WordPerfect Corp., 1555 N. Technology Way, Orem, Utah 84057, 800-225-5000. It costs $495.